

A: In Grafton, West Virginia.

Q: Well, turning our attention to Kansas City, then. I have several questions to ask you. Some of them are not very well related to others, but we'll wend our way through here and see what we can do. Do you recall particular problems with local cooperation in Kansas City?

A: Well, the job of a District Engineer is to assure local cooperation, and the only real arguments that ever came up were on plans to develop flood control on the Kansas River tributaries, and there was one that was quite serious. That had to do with the first dam we were going to build near Manhattan, Kansas. There was a really energetic group formed to fight that project. They even went out to see Eisenhower after he was elected, in Denver, I think. They called themselves the Blue Belles, went out in a bus.

Q: Are you referring to Tuttle Creek?

A: Tuttle Creek. That was the prime dam, the first one that had to be built, and it was very difficult for Senator [Frank] Carlson, who realized the dam should be built, and yet there was a strong, strong activity to prevent it being built, oh, even to the extent in Manhattan, if somebody was on the committee in favor of Tuttle Creek and they had a lumber yard, nobody bought his lumber anymore. I mean it was that serious. It was a very serious problem.

Q: I want to talk about Tuttle Creek a bit more because this particular problem extends right through to when you become the Division Engineer. It's still a problem.

A: Yes.

Q: Maybe we can hold off just for a second though. Do you recall something called the Greater Kansas City Flood Control Committee?

A: As an organization, no, but probably as the individuals, yes. I never had any trouble in Kansas City with the local hierarchy. They were people who wanted things done--Willard Breidenthal, Harry Massman--a great many people like that.

- Q: General [Lawrence J.] Lincoln said that when he went to Kansas City, he found that the chief of construction, a fellow by the name of McDonald, a civilian engineer, was extremely overbearing with contractors. Consequently, contractors didn't like him. Also he criticized a lot of the other senior personnel within the District. Do you recall this fellow, McDonald?
- A: A very acid personality. Subsequent to his employment in the District he went with an engineering firm and proceeded to energize a squabble about Tuttle Creek and the other dams on the Kaw River. Personally, I liked him, but as I say, he was a very pragmatic, acid type of personality and didn't bend to conversations leading towards a solution. The chief engineer there was a guy by the name of McCloskey. Now, he was an entirely different guy. When I went there, you see, I was preceded by a reserve officer, Colonel Neff, who'd been District Engineer at the end of the war, and he was my deputy. I set up a very strong construction organization, and I put McDonald in charge of it, and we became close friends. But McCloskey was the chief engineer, and I relied on him more than McDonald.
- Q: Do you recall--General Lincoln went on to say in an oral interview with somebody else--that McDonald used to love to go around in conferences, staff meetings, and tell everybody else what he was doing wrong. Did that ever happen when you were there?
- A: Well, not in that context. I required, I set up a procedure, where the Engineers would design things. Then before they went out to bid they would go to the construction division, which would analyze them for ease of construction or problems of construction, and then that had to be fed back into the engineering department. Arguments used to take place whether this thing should be actually moved or so on, or whether the size of the pump was big enough and all that sort of thing, so he, being the kind of guy he was, he would state his things positively.
- Q: I see. Do you recall giving some assistance to Fort Leavenworth while you were at Kansas City?

- A: Only I was sent up there on a preliminary survey to see whether the prison could be modernized. It was a pretty archaic facility.
- Q: What was your conclusion?
- A: That something had to be done, whether it was done or not, I don't know because then that went back to the Department of Prisons with somebody else.
- Q: I see. Do you recall anything about work at an ammunition plant at Lake City, Missouri?
- A: When I went to Kansas City, there was no place to live, but I received some help and moved into an apartment building that was not too--it was living, I mean, that was it. But, then I heard that the Lake City ammunition, small arms ammunitions facility, had a lot of houses on it, so with the exception of one or two that were maintained by resident force, I think I took over ten of the houses. And for the last year or so of my tour in Kansas City we lived at Lake City, and my kids went to school in Harry Truman's hometown, and it was great living because when the plant was built the houses were--they didn't hold back on the quality of the houses, so we had a very, very fine house.
- Q: Was the Corps actually involved in building that ammunition plant?
- A: It probably was. It probably was.
- Q: Were you involved in the reconstruction or modernization of Fort Leonard Wood?
- A: No. I think that was under the St. Louis District.
- Q: Okay. There were some problems that developed over the Harlan County Reservoir. Do you recall that project?
- A: Well, the Harlan County Dam had been started before the war but stopped during the course of the war, and I think my first dam building job as District Engineer was completing Harlan County, and the contracts were let for the completion. During the course of completing the dam it became obvious to engineers that the spillway apron probably needed

some tying down, that there might be uplift beneath it under severe spillway operations, and so a plan was developed where the spillway apron was tied down. That's the only problem that I remember with respect to it.

- Q: Do you recall any particular experiences in Kansas City that you'd like to tell me about aside from what we've already mentioned? We'll come to Tuttle Creek later on, so let's skip that for right now.
- A: Well, one of the problems was the reorganization of the District from a completely military construction operation to initiating again the civil works operation while continuing a great many of the military projects. For instance, we had to do with two major airfields in Kansas, one down in Missouri, one of them was named Scandia. These were being built for SAC, and we did have a very large military construction program in addition to the reinstitution of the civil program, and the civil program, involving not only the Harlan County Dam. But we initiated and finished the floodwall and levees around Kansas City up the Kansas River and up the Missouri River--down the Missouri River. And one of the interesting projects was the project of building a large bridge on dry land, just below Kansas City. A bridge had to be built because we wanted to straighten the river out.
- Q: This isn't the Decatur Bridge, is it? There was a Decatur Bridge that you were involved with as MRD Division Engineer.
- A: No, that was a different one. This is the one just below Kansas City, which we built on dry land, and then changed the river's channel underneath it after it was finished. The same thing was done north of Omaha later on at the Mormon Bridge. Easy way to build a bridge, by the way.
- Q: Was there much time that transpired between the time you completed the bridge and the time that the river's channel was changed?
- A: Oh no, as soon as the bridge was completed, and we put the new channel under the bridge and armored the banks, all we did was close off the old one and open up the new one, and the river took care of the major job.

Q: Okay, I see.

A: It was a fascinating time, because we also at that time initiated the levee projects, the agricultural levee projects, along the Missouri River from Rulo all the way down to the junction with the Mississippi River. These levees were a project in themselves, and of course, it called for a great deal of relationship to the farmers and agriculturists on both sides because they were largely for the protection of farmland. When the Missouri River flooded it used to flood the whole area, you know, and also the Missouri River, like the Mississippi, is a wild river. And it made its own new channel, and a large part of our effort on the Missouri was a continuation of something that had started years before, and that is maintaining the channel in the position that it was. You do that by armoring the banks and putting out dikes and redirecting the current.

Q: How were your relations with the Soil Conservation Service? You must've had to deal with them quite a bit.

A: That came up a little later, I think more in MRD than in Kansas City, because the Soil Conservation Service were just getting their teeth in the act. They had a job of selling to do with farmers, as you well know.

Q: In April 1948 you became the Alaska District Engineer?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you find that there was a housing problem in Anchorage when you moved up there?

A: No, I was housed on the post at Fort Richardson.

Q: How about for the staff itself? Was there a problem--do you know of any problems finding housing?

A: No, I think most of them lived somewhere in the area--right close to the area around--I don't think they were around the post, though. See, that was an Air Force base, really, with a small Army